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U.S. Is Playing 'Uncle Sap' for China

By JACK ANDERSON

AFTER months of intense, behind-the-scenes bargaining, the Reagan Administration will probably announce soon that Communist China has been given the status of a more-friendly country. This will enable Peking to buy higher-technology items of potential military value.

Oddly enough, the secret bargaining was not between U.S. and Chinese officials, but between different agencies of the Reagan Administration. The Defense Department opposed any relaxation of export rules that would allow the Chinese to pick our technological brains in militarily useful ways. The Commerce and State departments were willing to give away the store, while the CIA remained curiously neutral.

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger had history on his side in the argument. The Nixon Administration made the same mistake with the Soviet Union in the name of *detente*.

Prodded by Henry Kissinger, the Nixon regime allowed U.S. firms to export high-tech items to the Soviets, who promptly used them to enhance their military capability. For example, U.S. computers at the Kama River truck factory helped produce the vehicles that carried Red Army troops into Afghanistan in 1979.

Far more serious was the export of machinery to make miniature ball bearings, which gave the monster SS-18 missiles the accuracy needed to hit U.S. land-based missiles. It is this capability, of course, that is causing the United States to spend billions on the MX-missile program. It was the most exact fulfillment so far of Lenin's cynical prediction that capitalism will sell communism the rope it hangs us with.

THE Reagan Administration evidently does remember one bit of history: Kissinger was saddled with the blame for the *detente*-inspired military advantage we gave the Russians. So the White House is letting Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige take full credit for the Chinese trade deal.

Not that the Yale-educated former cowboy doesn't deserve the responsibility. As a professional rodeo performer, Baldrige's specialty was steer roping. But as a high-level negotiator, he played the steer's role; the Chinese roped and branded him like a stray doggie.

How did they do it? Essentially, by blackmail at both the Governmental and personal level.

Peking first warned ominously that U.S.-Chinese relations might break over Taiwan. President Reagan then made a number of concessions on the issue — enough to cause conservatives to accuse him of breaking his campaign promise of solidarity with Taiwan.

Having succeeded with that gambit, the Chinese next began complaining that U.S. export restrictions were endangering relations between the two powers. Baldrige leaped into the saddle and galloped off to the rescue — and promptly fell into the Chinese "trip trap."

The trip trap works like this: A high American official is invited to Peking for important discussions. The Chinese roll out the red carpet and assure the visitor that his is really an extraordinary mission. The distinguished guest is treated alternately with deference and disdain — depending on what he brought along for his hosts in the form of concessions.

Since high-level trips to Peking are still not routine events, the American official's visit is given saturation coverage by the world press. The last thing he wants is to be snubbed by the Chinese leadership, thus making him look foolish

by having him deal only with lower-level officials and — horror of horrors — have his trip declared a failure.

So the prudent emissary makes

sure he brings enough in his briefcase to assure the royal treatment in Peking. The result is what in Imperial China was called the *kowtow*. In no other capital do American dignitaries assume the role of supplicants begging the approval of their hosts.

The technique clearly worked with the cowboy from Washington: My office has been apprised of a series of memos, classified "secret," in which Baldrige demanded an increase in the quantity and quality of exports as proof of our friendship for China.

ON Jan. 26, 1983, Baldrige wrote to the President's national-security adviser, William Clark, urging him to persuade the President to change the export rules. Since the secret policy regarding exports to China was worked out in July 1981, Baldrige complained, "agreement has been reached between Commerce and Defense on only 14 of over 200 items . . . and the process of seeking such agreement has ground to a halt."

Change the rules so the Pentagon's picky objections wouldn't kill lucrative export deals, Baldrige urged, adding: "Time is of the essence."

On March 29, he wrote Clark again, recommending four possible options. The one the Administration has chosen puts Communist China "in the Free World export-licensing category, thereby treating it the same as Yugoslavia and India."

This policy, Baldrige wrote, would be "relatively simple to administer" (that is, no hassles with the Pentagon), and would create "closer strategic ties between (China) and the United States." He conceded that there were three drawbacks:

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- "Allies might balk at such a bold U.S. move for China, as we simultaneously attempt to tighten controls for USSR.

- "Might entail unacceptable risk to long-term U.S. national-security interests.

- "Politically unacceptable to treat China as a Free World country."

But these misgivings were overridden, and Baldrige was allowed to promise the Chinese that export controls would be relaxed just for them. Since his return from Peking in late May, Baldrige has had an interagency group trying to implement the promises he made.

Baldrige has won a major victory — over the Pentagon. It may be years before the true cost of his victory becomes clear.

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